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Organizing People: Managing schedules and Work-Life Balance

According to an *Edutopia* author, Claudia Graziano, 45 percent of teachers have quit their education careers after five years, due to the major role of stress-related burnout (Five Tips)

In order to fight the burn out curve of the teaching career, one must balance work and personal life to maintain emotional, physical, and mental health stability.

Work-Life Balance

Donald Trump said “if you’re interested in ‘balancing’ work and pleasure, stop trying to balance them. Instead make your work more pleasurable”, which is a suggestion that can be used in all careers, specifically for teaching (BrainyQuote, 2014).

Work related stress can set a thick unattractive film on personal life. An online site, Career Psychologists calls work-life balance, “working equilibrium” (Work-Life Balance, 2013). The career psychologists blame unbalanced equilibriums on the business trends of having higher expectations for employees resulting in longer work hours. These high pressures can be felt by both men and woman and for single people as well as those with families.

[Green Alarm Clock](#) by George Hodan **Public Domain**



Cris Hunt, a former teacher who is an author for *The Guardian: Professional Development* discusses what a an unbalanced teacher feels like.

So you've just got home; you have to collect the kids from their nursery, cook tea, clear up and then start your marking. Then the preparation for the next day starts. You put your children to bed; one of them is in tears because she is being bullied at school. The other one has just landed a principal role in the school production. Neither of them wanted to tell you earlier because you looked so busy and they knew you had so much to do. You get finished by 9:30pm then you shower and get ready for the next day. It's now 10pm. But then there's that report your headteacher has said: "Can you please complete this by tomorrow?" (Hunt, 2013)

Hunt proposes the idea of teacher guilt and how this guilt can effect teachers' personal lives, and spin stress out of control. Stress can effect family life, where a teacher may choose to stay home and grade papers when the rest of the family is going out for a movie night. These choices can strain relationships, emotions, and health over time.

Managing Stress

A part of having a healthy work-life balance it to also be able to manage stress.

Marilu Henner once said "Being in control of your life and having realistic expectations about your day-to-day challenges are the keys to stress management, which is perhaps the most important ingredient to living a happy, healthy and rewarding life." (BrainyQuote, 2014)

There are several things in teaching that can trigger stress and impact teachers' working equilibrium. Marie Delaney wrote in a article called "Teacher stress, well-being and stress management - Taking care of yourself so that you can take care of your students" posted on the British Council website, which explains main reasons why teachers are stressed and what they can do about it (Delaney, 2013). Delaney describes these triggers as teachers striving to be perfect, try harder, and to stay strong. These unrealistic ambitions cause stress when teachers think they "failed" to succeed. Therefore, teachers need to be realistic on these ambitions (Delaney, 2013). Instead of trying to be perfect, teachers need to acknowledge that mistakes van be beneficial for growth. Trying harder is not always efficient. Teachers need to try something different and not get upset when something does not work every time. Lastly, teachers are human and can be human. Humans have feelings and emotions that should not be concealed to appear "strong", like a robot (Delaney, 2013).

There are several strategies that teachers can use to keep their spirits up and remain effective. Delaney's first suggestion is for teachers to focus on only what they can control by making a list of things that are causing stress and then dividing the list in two to separate the things that are controllable or not at the moment. Another suggestion is to "be your own best friend" by talking to yourself in a positive way like if you were talking to your friend. Delaney also says to train "yourself to see the positive" by by writing down six highlights of the day every night (Delaney, 2013).

Time Management

“Waste your money and you’re only out of money, but waste your time and you’ve lost a part of your life”, wise words from Michael LeBoef, relevant directly to the importance of time management to evolve a balance of work and personal life.

As a teacher, time management is one of the most important skills to have to keep sane through out the day and over time. John Alfuth, an author for online teacher resources, [*The Educator’s Room*](#) and [*Bluff City Education*](#), gives suggestions about time management based on what he uses for time management methods in his everyday life (Alfuth, 2014). The first thing that Alfuth suggests, which he wishes he did in the beginning of his teaching career, is to write a list detailing what is desired to be accomplished in the personal life, outside of work. For example, exercise, starting and finishing a free choice book, church, family dinner, other recreational activities, are all components of personal life that can be short chained because of busy careers. This list is to serve as a guide for the teacher to prioritize highly as he or she creates their work schedule.

Next Alfuth shares that he creates a detailed schedule of the next day the night before. Creating a daily schedule the night before, develops a game plan for a busy person that needs to prioritize actions and keep track of how much time is to be spent on each component of the day. He estimates that it “takes 10 to 15 minutes” but he says the schedule increases his productivity dramatically and it forces him to “think through what (he) can realistically accomplish on a daily basis” (Alfuth, 2014).

Prioritizing must be done to create a realistic schedule and a happy teacher. The schedule can also be used as a reflective tool for teachers to go back and see what they spent the most time on in a week or month. Alfuth explained that during a vacation break he reflected on what he was spending the most time on, grading, which is a low priority for him (Alfuth, 2014). He then realized that he was spending almost no time on communicating with parents, which he prioritized very high. Therefore, he made grading more efficient and less taxing so there would be more time to call parents weekly.

A part of prioritizing is to “say no” when there are too many entrees on once plate. Alfuth describes how it “can be tempting to take on every new initiative that comes your way” but when extra participation is limited to just a few high priority activities it allows the teacher to participate to his or her best abilities (Alfuth, 2014).

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